



## Mazda 3

### Battle of the classes

Car review | What's the best compact car? That question is as impossible to answer as "What's the tastiest food?" The answer is personal. However, it is possible to say what the sweetest or sourest food is. For Mazda the best compact car is spacious, comfortable and a bit sporty. With that in mind, did Mazda manage to make the best possible compact car?

It's a Mazda, that's obvious. But which one? For some years now all Mazdas have been designed according to "Kodo". This comprises flowing, almost organic lines and therefore excellent aerodynamics. But because all Mazdas are designed in the same style, it is hard to tell them apart. This mid-sized model looks like a lowered "CX5" or a shortened "Mazda6". Compared to its rivals from other brands the "3" looks more solid and a bit larger.

Looks do not deceive. With a length of 4.46 metres the Mazda3 is significantly bigger than other cars in this segment. The wheelbase of 2.70 metres is also larger. Mazda compares the "3" with cars like the BMW 1-Series and the Volvo V40, and that's not just wishful thinking.

### Space

The cabin has a premium feel to it as well, thanks to the beautiful materials, high build quality and spacious layout. The seats are big and comfy, while even offering lateral support. Those who haven't seen the car from the outside might assume they've taken up place in a prestigious car with an evenly "prestigious"

price tag. The difference is in the room to move, because the Mazda3 offers just average space; both in the front and the back.



The equipment is modern, yet Mazda doesn't offer all the bells and whistles available in this segment. For example, there's no camera that scrutinises traffic and the Mazda3 cannot park itself. Because of the tiny rear window and heavily tinted side windows, an extra parking aid would have been welcome.

The basic models feature a traditional speedometer

with small displays on either side to show the engine speed and fuel gauge. The sportier models replace the speedometer by a large rev counter, just like a sports car. The speed is shown on a small transparent panel that sits above the steering column right in the view of the driver.



Mazda boasts about its newly developed audio, satnav and communication system called "MZD Connect". Its graphics look great and the system is very easy to use. The display used to control all functions sits on top of the dashboard like a jewel. Because of this it is very easy to read. Be aware that the screen doesn't fold away when the car is parked, so it might be a target for thieves.

Regrettably, the functionality of "MZD Connect" leaves something to be desired. When the iPhone was connected using a cable, the connection was lost more than once during the test drives. As with most cars, an Android device isn't recognised at all. "Apps" for Internet radio and social media can be installed on the device. While Internet radio works just fine, the social media apps turn out to be awkward plug-ins for Internet radio. Contacts become "artists" and messages become "tracks". Highly confusing! Also, this is just one-way traffic. One cannot reply to a tweet or message, like other brands allow.



## Petrol

While almost all other brands are downsizing to improve efficiency, Mazda chooses the "old fashioned" large engines. Mazda calls this "right sizing" and it quickly becomes clear why. The Mazda engines are more refined and that adds to the feeling of driving a larger car.

By saving weight, improving aerodynamics and refining existing technology Mazda claims it is as frugal as the other brands. This package of fuel saving measurements is called "SkyActiv" at Mazda.



The characteristic of the engine is also part of this. The 2.0 litre petrol engine develops either 120 or 165 PS

depending on the version, while in both cases the maximum torque is 210 Nm. The maximum power is only available at very high engine speeds. At low revs the response to the throttle is indirect, to encourage the driver to go slow and thus save fuel. The 120 PS is very docile; the 165 PS version reacts a bit quicker and is more convincing at high speeds.



The difference with the small engines from other brands is that the Mazda engines are smoother. The engine speed can be kept so slow that it almost handles like a diesel. The fuel efficiency of both petrol engines is almost the same. A test drive with the 120 PS cost 6.2 litres per 100 km (45 mpg), while the stronger 165 PS engine used up 6.5 litres for every 100 km (43 mpg).

Do bear in mind that different tyres on the different versions can make a big difference. The economy models with low resistance tyres will keep rolling after releasing the throttle. The sportier models lose speed quickly, making them feel heavier and making it harder to economize.



## Diesel

The diesel engine has a displacement of 2.2 litres, which is also more than usual. While the petrol engines have clearly been tuned for efficiency, the diesel engine seems to want to perform! The 150 PS / 380 Nm strong diesel engine reacts more fiercely on the throttle, and even at low revs, acceleration is impressive.

The 165 PS strong petrol engine is stronger on paper; in real life the diesel engine feels quicker. When the pedal is pressed to the metal, the "Mazda 3 SkyActiv-D" is a truly quick car. With the diesel engine under the bonnet the Mazda3 can easily be compared to cars from a higher segment.



Even after a sporty test drive the diesel was very frugal with only 4 litres per 100 km (71 mpg)(factory figure: 4.1 litres per 100 km (69 mpg)). A word of warning: this figure was only realised after a lengthy drive; on short distances and city traffic, the diesel engine isn't as efficient.

## Handling

The previous generations of the Mazda3 were both comfortable and sporty. The new Mazda3 also offers plenty of comfort and the communication between the driver and the car is exceptionally good. The suspension isn't soft and yet bumps in the road are ironed out very well. Steering is direct and precise. This is why it seems like braking for corners is merely optional. However, handling isn't in fact any better than with most other cars.

With this new generation, emphasis is more on comfort than before. This makes the new Mazda3 less agile and instead it offers more refinement and the feeling of driving a car from a higher class.

## Conclusion

Mazda enters the battle of the classes with the all-new Mazda3. A lengthy test drive shows how Mazda plans to win the battle: by being in a class of its own.

The Mazda3 is larger and has more mature looks than most other cars in its class. On top of that, Mazda opted for higher quality materials, high trim levels (although "MZD Connect" really disappointed in the current version) and some clever ergonomic features.

While most other brands are "downsizing", Mazda says it is "right sizing" by using relatively large engines and making them more efficient by improving existing technology. This, together with the refined suspension, gives the feeling of driving a very classy car indeed. ■



# Specifications

## Mazda 3 SkyActiv-G 120 SE-L

### Size and weight



Length x width x height	446 x 180 x 145 cm
Wheelbase	270 cm
Kerb weight	1.280 kg
Trailer	600 kg
Trailer - braked	1.300 kg
Fuel capacity	51 l
Luggage space	350/1250 l
Tyre size	205/60R16

### Engine and performance



Capacity	1998 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	120 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	210 Nm @ 4000 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	8.9 secs
Top speed	195 km/h
Average mileage	5.1 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.5 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.3 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	119 gr / km

### Price

Price	Â£ 18,795
Price base model	Â£ 16,995